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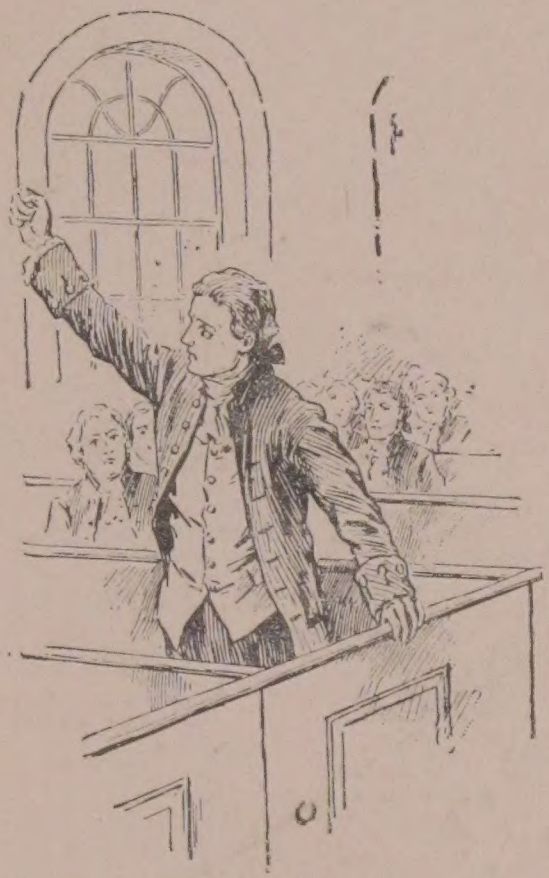
Patrick Henry

Artie Littlefield



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(Continued on third cover page)

INSTRUCTOR LITERATURE SERIES

The Story of Patrick Henry

BY

Artie Littlefield

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Patrick Henry

The Story of Patrick Henry

A long time ago, in the mountains of old Virginia, there lived a beautiful little boy, who had many brothers and sisters, whom he loved dearly. His parents, though not rich, had a nice home, and were among the most respectable people of Virginia. When he was quite young he was sent to a little school in the neighborhood, where he learned to read and write.

When he was ten years old he was taken home and placed under the direction of his father, who had a grammar school in his own house. Here he learned some Latin and Greek and Arithmetic. But he was an idle boy and cared most for sports of the field. He loved hunting and fishing more than study, and loafing more than books.

When he went to the forest with his gun, or to the little brook to fish, he would stay for days at a time. His companions said, "let us find out why this boy is so fond of hunting and fishing." So they watched him in his amusements. They saw him lying under the shade of some tree watching for hours the motionless cork of his fishing line. He never became discouraged

if he did not catch a fish, but seemed to enjoy the stillness of the scene and the thoughts that were going on in his mind.

When out hunting with a party, he did not care to join the noisy crowd of boys that drove the deer, but would stand at a distance and watch the playful animals as they passed. He never cared for play as other boys; he seldom said anything to his companions, and never seemed to notice what they were doing. But on being asked by his father what he had seen and heard while at play, he could tell him the exact words of every child.

He was a child of nature and enjoyed the beautiful sunsets, the mountain scenery, the winding rivers, and the little brooks filled with fishes. He was a genius such as we seldom see, although this was not apparent to the people because he had such odd habits.

He was a modest, bashful boy and was always afraid of pushing himself forward. Unlike most boys he was indifferent to dress. A new coat or pair of shoes had no charms for him.

He struggled through years of poverty, for his father could not earn enough to support such a large family. He talked to Patrick, for that was the boy's name, about earning some money for himself. Patrick said, "I will see what I can do." He was not afraid of work and at the early age of fifteen he went behind the counter of a country store. Here he did very well, for the next year he was prepared to carry on business in his own store.

Mr. Henry, the father of Patrick, bought some goods, and Patrick and his brother William were given charge of the new store. But to the disappointment of his father, Patrick did not succeed in this as he had in the first store. His idle thoughts of fishing and hunting came back to him, and he would be quiet and indifferent for days.

There were other reasons for his failure. He was a kind-hearted boy and when poor people came to the store and wanted credit, he could not refuse them. Neither was he good at making bargains. Customers on coming to the store would buy a few articles, and then sit around smoking their pipes and telling stories. Patrick would listen to the conversation, but seldom joined in it, unless the discussions became dull and silent. He then would tell stories, which would excite by turns their pity, terror, anger and contempt. He would notice the effect of his stories and would watch the different emotions. He would start a debate and when they differed he would ask their reasons.

The little store remained open only a couple of years. Patrick could not teach himself to measure out teas, sugars, and spices. But all the time he was doing something just as important: he was studying the habits of the customers as they came and went.

Patrick was married at the age of eighteen to a Miss Sheldon, the daughter of a good old farmer in the neighborhood. Patrick and his wife went to live on a little farm, and here he worked very hard for a living. You can imagine this young man with the cares of a

Patrick Henry

family and the way he had to labor to earn his bread from the soil.

The wealthy would pass in great splendor, and would see Patrick at work in his old clothes covered with dirt. They never thought then that some day this poor man would humble their pride and make the prince himself tremble on his distant throne. They little dreamed that in the future his great words would shake the brightest jewels from the British crown.

Nor did Mr. Henry himself think of such things. There were many misfortunes in his life. He was threatened with a famine, no kind friends came to cheer or help him, not a word of comfort did he receive except from his own family.

Becoming very much discouraged, after a trial of two years, Mr. Henry gave up farming and sold all his little possessions. "Now," Mr. Henry thought to himself, "what shall I do?" He decided the second time to enter a little store on the corner, in the village, and thought surely this time it would be a success. But the same want of method and the same kind of temper soon became known by their terrible effects.

As he had a natural talent for music he spent much time with his violin and flute, of which he was very fond. Day after day he would close his store and pass the time in enjoying the sports of his boyhood days.

He also liked to read. He read the charters and history of the colony of Virginia. He was fond of the histories of Greece and Rome. He became so pleased with some books, and interested in them, that he made

a practice of reading them through once every year.

The greatness of the Roman people filled him with surprise and admiration, and he was much pleased with the fine descriptions and good language which the books contained.

Patrick had failed the second time in a store and was left without a penny, with every atom of property gone, and his friends unable to help him. Again he said, "What shall I do? I am so poor!" He tried every means of support, and each one failed. Ruin was behind him; poverty, debt, want and famine before him, and his wife and children were sick.

But as Mr. Henry had great firmness of character and plenty of faith, he tried as hard as he could to be cheerful under these dark clouds. He said, "If I have lost one part of my life in idleness, I am not going to throw away the remainder in despair."

About this time Mr. Thomas Jefferson, the man who wrote the Declaration of Independence, became acquainted with Mr. Henry. It happened that Mr. Jefferson spent his Christmas holidays with a friend who lived near Mr. Henry, and during the gay season they met every day. He did not let his new friend know of his misfortunes, but all the time he was in great trouble as to the future. He was a long time in making up his mind what to do, but finally decided to study law. His friends all said, "Mr. Henry, you will fail; we feel sure you will never succeed as a lawyer." He said he would be pleased if he made only a living for himself and family.

After studying but six weeks he felt prepared to take the examination. He was dressed in an odd fashion, and looked and acted very awkward. He had never seen some of the books on which he was examined, but his answers to the examination were such that he was given the license required to practice law.

Mr. Randolph, the man who examined him, said, "Mr. Henry, if your industry be only half equal to your genius, I think that you will do well and become an ornament and an honor to your profession."

Mr. Henry got his license when he was only twenty-four years old. At this time his poor little family was suffering from want of food, and as he could not make enough to support them, they went to live with his father-in-law, Mr. Sheldon, who then kept a tavern at Hanover Court House.

When Mr. Henry was admitted to the bar, there was trouble in Virginia which caused great excitement. The trouble arose between the clergy and the people of the colony, and was called the "Parson's Cause." It was a question whether the parsons should be paid in money, or in tobacco, which was used as currency, like gold or bank notes.

The Assembly of Virginia had fixed the yearly salary of the ministers by law at sixteen thousand pounds of tobacco, or six hundred and forty dollars in cash. There came a time when tobacco was much higher, and would bring in the market much more than the six hundred and forty dollars. The clergy thought that this rise in value should be to their advantage. So

An Old Virginia Courthouse, Where Patrick Henry Tried His First Law Case

when the question of damages was to be settled, Mr. Henry was to be the lawyer who should speak against the cause.

When this became known, everybody began to laugh. It seemed absurd that an ignorant youth like him should attempt to do what the old lawyers could not. He had never made a public speech in his life, and it was known that there would be a crowd of noted men from all the counties around, anxious to hear the results.

Among the clergy who came to hear the argument was the Rev. Patrick Henry, uncle of young Patrick. On seeing his uncle, Patrick walked up to him and expressed his regret at seeing him. "Why so?" inquired the uncle. "Because," replied Patrick, "I fear that, as I have never yet spoken in public, I shall be too much frightened by your presence to do justice to my clients. Besides," he added, "I shall be under the necessity of saying some hard things of the clergy which it may be unpleasant for you to hear."

"As to your saying hard things of the clergy," said the old gentleman, good naturedly. "I advise you to be cautious, as you will be more likely to injure your own cause than theirs. Since, however, you seem to think otherwise, and desire it of me so earnestly, you shall be pleased." He then entered his carriage and drove home.

When it came time for his speech, Mr. Henry, with every nerve trembling and shaking with excitement, rose slowly from his seat and with the greatest difficulty began to speak. But he had not talked long when

a great change came over him. His position became lofty and erect, his eyes grew bright, his hands swept the air with graceful curvings, and he seemed to grow taller and taller with inspiration and force.

The people, who had kept their heads down, had heard but a few sentences when they began to look up, then look at each other with surprise. They were so amazed they could not believe their own senses. They were so charmed with the lofty expression of his countenance that they could look away no more. In less than twenty minutes, they could be seen in every part of the house, on every bench, in every window, stooping forward from their places, in death-like silence, so as to catch every word of the speaker.

After the speech was over the people seized Mr. Henry and carried him about on their shoulders, amid the wildest excitement and applause. He sprang at once into popularity as "the people's champion."

The Virginians used to say of an eloquent man, "He is almost equal to Patrick Henry when he plead against the parsons." After this speech he found no difficulty in getting practice. He moved to the county of Louisa. He became such a brilliant orator that when he arose to speak, the judge, who seldom listened to a speech, would lay down his pen and would not write another word, till Mr. Henry had finished.

From the day he gave this famous speech, he became a prominent man in history. It brought him practice as a lawyer; advancement as a public man and power as a politician. He became a member of the House of

Burgesses of Virginia. This body of men made the laws for the colony, just as our legislatures make the laws for our states. They were generally rich men, with large farms, and lived in great style. They loved England, for the Virginia people had never forgotten that their fathers and grandfathers were Englishmen, and they were proud of their blood.

Mr. Henry was also a delegate to the first and second Continental Congress, first commander of Virginia's Revolutionary army and first governor of the state of Virginia.

Afterward he refused to be United States senator, secretary of state, ambassador to France and vice-president of the United States. All these high honors might have been his had he but said "yes."

A great man who heard Mr. Henry for the first time, said: "He is by far the most powerful speaker I ever heard. Every word he says not only engages, but commands, the attention. His eloquence is the smallest part of his merit. He is, in my opinion, the first man upon this continent, as well in ability as in public virtues, and had he lived in Rome about the time of the Punic Wars—when the Roman people were in the height of their glory—Mr. Henry's talents would have put him at the head of that glorious commonwealth."

One night the legislators were hurried out of their beds, and told to flee to the estate of Colonel George Moffett near-by. On this estate there was a big cave, where the legislators could hide in safety. One of the members got on only one boot, leaving the other behind.

Mrs. Moffett received these statesmen and entertained them as well as she could, but at breakfast, next morning, she could not keep from saying that the legislature had one member who would not have fled from the enemy. "Who is he?" was asked. "Patrick Henry," she replied, proudly, looking also with disdain at the guest in one boot, who was seen to be in some confusion. Just then a negro rode up from Staunton, carrying a boot, and inquiring for Patrick Henry.

In that way Mrs. Moffett learned whom it was that the boot fitted.

One of the most important events during the life of Patrick Henry was the passing of the famous Stamp Act, which ordered that stamps, bought of the British government, should be put on all documents, newspapers, and pamphlets. This the people of Virginia did not like. The people were at first grief-stricken, then indignant, and then wrathful. Crowds of excited men ran to and fro in the towns, and there were deeds of violence.

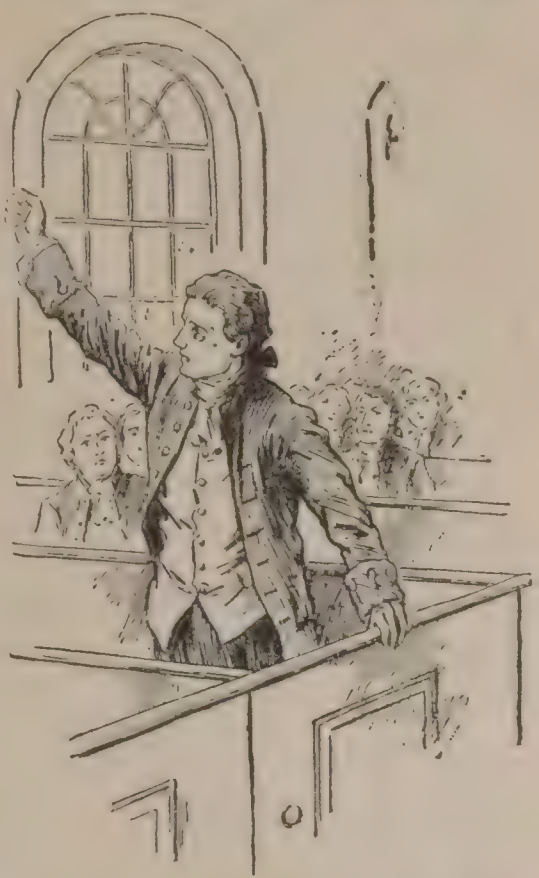
One day the Virginia Assembly was in session, and the members were talking about this hateful Stamp Act. Patrick Henry said the people were not bound to obey such a law and that the king was a tyrant to allow it to be passed. In the midst of his speech he said, "Caesar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and George the Third—"

"Treason, treason," cried the Speaker of the Assembly and the excited listeners.

But their cries did not frighten the brave patriot,

and he finished his sentence—"may profit by their example. If this be treason, make the most of it."

He took his seat after uttering these brave words, in the midst of great excitement. It was plain that his speech had made a strong impression. Speech after speech was made—some in favor of, and some opposed to the resolutions; but at last, it was seen that Henry's wonderful eloquence had swept away everything.



As Mr. Henry pushed through the crowd, a plain countryman slapped him on the shoulder, and exclaimed, "Stick to us, old fellow, or we are gone!"

What Patrick Henry had said against the Stamp Act proved like seed sown in good ground. It lay there for ten years. At last it began to sprout and appeared above ground when the War of Independence broke out.

Mr. Henry saw and realized the condition of the colonies, as did no other man. He knew that it was no longer possible to remain happily united to England. He said, "All distinctions are thrown down. All America is thrown into one mass. I am not a Virgin-

ian, but an American.'' And he delivered the speech that gave him the greatest fame and led the people of the colonies to know, to honor and respect him.

It was in a little old church, which still stands on the top of one of the beautiful Richmond hills, that Patrick Henry, on rising to his feet in the pew (which is now marked by a tablet and shown to visitors), declared war on Great Britain in a speech that lives today in millions of American homes. Some said, ''war may come, but it will be prevented.'' ''May come,'' exclaimed Patrick Henry. ''May come! It has come,'' and he broke into his famous oration.

Tall and thin in figure, carelessly dressed in his suit of gray, Patrick Henry faced the president and said: ''No man, Mr. President, thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism or the ability of every gentleman. But men often see the same subject in different lights. This is no time to stand back. The question before the House is one of awful moment to the country. For my part, I think it nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free, if we wish not to give up the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, we must fight. I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and the God of Hosts is all that is left us. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, peace! but there is no peace. The war is begun. Our brethren are already in the field. Why stand we here idle? What is it that men wish? What would they have? Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be bought at the price of chains and

slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

This great speech was never forgotten by friend or foe, and will always live as one of the greatest ever made by any American. It turned Virginia, as in a flash, for independence, and made her stand side by side with some of the other colonies in the fight for liberty.

How ready Patrick Henry was to live up to his grand saying of "liberty or death," was seen when the trying plans for the great Revolution were being made. As he loved a gun in his boyhood, he was no less fond of one in his manhood, and was ready to fight for the good of his country.

He was chosen colonel of the first regiment, and made commander-in-chief of all the forces raised to protect the colony. With five thousand men he marched upon the king's governor, Lord Dunmore, and demanded the stolen powder of the province or pay for its loss. And the king's governor wisely sent his general with three hundred and thirty pounds to pay for the stolen powder.

Now Mr. Henry had gained such a reputation and was so much liked by his friends, that they soon made him the highest man in the state by choosing him governor. He went to live in a beautiful house at Williamsburg. Here he had fine horses and coaches and lived in luxury. There were many compliments paid Mr. Henry for his intelligence and vigorous activity,

Patrick Henry Delivering His Celebrated Speech

although the people were at first in ignorance of his real qualities as a governor. His friends knew that when he was a candidate the second time, they could not have made a better choice. And he proved to be such a good governor that he was elected to that office a third and a fourth time. He was a good and true friend of George Washington, and wrote him some very affectionate letters, of which Mr. Washington was very proud.

One early spring it was seen that Virginia, whose soil had never known the tread of an army, was soon to experience a great conflict. And no one saw it more clearly than Governor Henry. He knew that Virginia must at once make ready, if possible, to help defend her sister states. So Mr. Henry wrote a letter to General Washington, telling him of the trouble. In less than two months the dreaded warships of the enemy were ploughing the waters along Virginia's coast, making their way to Hampton Roads.

They came with great quantities of military stores, and also had many large flat-bottomed boats in which to land their troops. The governor tried to arouse the people of Virginia so they would be prepared to meet this enemy and keep them from landing. But though all did their best, a number of British soldiers were landed. They took Portsmouth, burnt, plundered, and destroyed some near-by towns, and committed a number of terrible deeds.

In the midst of all this trouble Mr. Henry's term of office was at an end. His friends strongly urged him to

take it another year, but he wrote a kind letter, thanking them, and saying that he wished to retire in a few days. Mr. Henry's successor in the office of governor was Thomas Jefferson, the jolly friend of his own jolly boyhood.

After his retirement from office, Mr. Henry went to live on his beautiful estate called Leatherwood. It consisted of about ten thousand acres. Here he enjoyed himself and lived at ease for some time. Being in poor health, he soon found great relief in this distant, wild and mountainous country. He spent much time going about the country enjoying himself.

One day Patrick Henry, Benjamin Harrison, and John Tyler, tired and hungry, stopped their horses at the door of a small hut, in a gorge of the hills, and asked for food. An old woman, who was alone in the house, came to the door, asked them who they were and where they were from.

Patrick Henry said, "We are members of the legislature and have just been compelled to leave Charlottesville on account of the approach of the enemy." "Ride on, then, ye cowardly men," replied she, in great wrath, "here have my husband and sons just gone to Charlottesville to fight for ye, and you running away with all your might. Clear out. Ye shall have nothing." "But," said Mr. Henry, "we were obliged to fly. Here is Mr. Speaker Harrison, you don't think he would have fled had it not been necessary, do you?"

"I always thought a great deal of Mr. Harrison till now," answered the old woman, "but he'd no busi-

ness to run from the enemy,'' and she was about to shut the door in their faces.

''Wait a moment, my good woman,'' urged Mr. Henry. ''You would hardly believe that Mr. Tyler would take to flight, if there were not good cause for so doing.'' ''No, indeed, that I would not,'' she replied, ''I never would have thought it, but since they have run away from the British they shall have nothing to eat in my house.''

''What would you say, my good little woman, if I were to tell you that Patrick Henry fled with the rest of us?''

''Patrick Henry! I should tell you there wasn't a word of truth in it,'' she answered angrily. ''Patrick Henry would never do such a cowardly thing.'' ''But this is Patrick Henry,'' said Mr. Tyler, pointing to him. The old woman was amazed, and with a twitch or two at her apron strings, she said: ''Well then, if that's Patrick Henry it must be all right. Come in and ye shall have the best I have in the house.''

When Mr. Henry was chosen governor and went to the city to live, he became more careful in his dress. He never went before the public except in a scarlet cloak, black coat, waistcoat, and knee breeches, and wearing a wig, as all men did in those days. His family was furnished with an excellent coach. They lived elegantly, and associated with as polished society as any governor before or since has ever done.

He entertained royally and when, at the end of his fourth term, he resigned the office, people were sur-

prised to find that he was in debt, and that he had to take up the practice of law again to make a living.

His energy was richly rewarded, and at the end of eight years he was able to retire in comfort and wealth from all public and professional employments.

Once there was to be a great trial of some kind and Patrick Henry settled down to study about it in his own house, in the country. He had in his yard an office built some distance from his dwelling, and an avenue of fine black locusts shaded a walk in front of the house. When the weather was good he walked and thought in this shaded avenue. He always carried his note book in his hand and wrote down his thoughts as they came into his mind.

Just before the trial he shut himself up in the office for three days, during which time he did not see his family. His food was handed to him through the office door, by a servant.

The result was that he won the case by his good reasoning, his study, and the vivid feeling with which he spoke.

Mr. Henry changed his home again from Prince Edward County to an estate called Red Hill. Here he remained as long as he lived. It was a beautiful place, built on an elevated ridge, overlooking the valley below. Here, under the lofty trees which shaded his lawn, he would sit for hours at a time. His chair was leaned against the trunk of some friendly tree, and by his side was a can of cool spring water from which he took frequent drinks. Or tiring of this resting place, Mr. Henry

would walk about from one beautiful spot to another.

His great delight was in being with his friends, and with his family of which he was very fond. He liked to lie on the floor and have a group of little ones climbing over him, or dancing around him to a tune from his violin. He was never known to be angry and was always calm and gentle. The smell of tobacco smoke was very disagreeable to him, and the old colored house-servants were compelled to hide their pipes and rid themselves of the smell of tobacco before they went near him.

His house overlooked the large fields of his plantation. Most of the year he arose very early in the morning, and standing where he could see the servants at their tasks, he gave orders to them and watched to see how they did their work.

These servants were slaves. From the beginning to the end of his life, Patrick Henry was a slave-holder. Yet he hated slavery and its fatal effects.

Mr. Henry set a good example of honesty, benevolence, hospitality, kindness and every virtue. Although he did not get an early education, he assisted in the education of his children.

He made every effort to establish Christianity in our country. He gave himself to the study of the Bible and was known as a truly religious person.

After dividing his estate among his children he said, "This is all I can give to my dear family. The religion of Christ can give them that which will make them rich indeed."

In his last sickness he wrote a beautiful letter to his affectionate daughter Martha, who lived a distance of two days' travel from Red Hill.

On receiving the sad news she and all the relatives made haste to go to him. On arriving they found him sitting in a large, old-fashioned arm chair, in which he was easier than upon a bed. He soon died, loved by all who knew him, and some have said, "We never shall look upon his like again."

On the Capitol Square at Richmond is a beautiful bronze statue of Mr. Henry. He is holding up both arms and is represented as he is supposed to have looked when he exclaimed, in one of his great speeches, "Give me liberty or give me death!"

There were many other noted men in Virginia. Among them was one by the name of John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg who was a pastor in a little town called Woodstock. He was very much opposed to Great Britain, and in 1775 he was elected colonel of a Virginia regiment.

The following poem describes his farewell sermon. At its close he threw off his ministerial gown, and stood in a soldier's uniform. Being such a friend of the congregation almost every man enlisted under him at the church door.

Mr. Muhlenberg became a well known general in the Revolutionary War and after its close served his country in Congress and many official positions.

THE REVOLUTIONARY RISING

Out of the North the wild news came,
Far flashing on its wings of flame,
Swift as the boreal light which flies
At midnight through the startled skies.

And there was tumult in the air,
The fife's shrill note, the drum's loud beat,
And through the wide land everywhere
The answering tread of hurrying feet;
While the first oath of Freedom's gun
Came on the blast from Lexington;
And Concord, roused, no longer tame,
Forgot her old baptismal name,
Made bare her patriot arm of power,
And swelled the discord of the hour.

The yeoman and the yeoman's son,
With knitted brows and sturdy dint
Renewed the polish of each gun,
Re-oiled the lock, reset the flint;
And oft the maid and matron there
While kneeling in the firelight glare,
Long poured, with half-suspended breath,
The lead into the molds of death.

The hands by Heaven made silken soft
To soothe the brow of love or pain,
Alas are dulled and soiled too oft
By some unhallowed earthly stain;
But under the celestial bound
No nobler picture can be found
Than woman, brave in word and deed,
Thus serving in her nation's need:
Her love is with her country now,
Her hand is on its aching brow.

Within its shade of elm and oak
The church of Berkley Manor stood:
There Sunday found the rural folk,
And some esteemed of gentle blood.
In vain their feet with loitering tread
Passed 'mid the graves where rank is naught:
All could not read the lesson taught
In that republic of the dead.

And now before the open door—
The warrior priest had ordered so—
The enlisting trumpet's sudden roar
Rang through the chapel, o'er and o'er,
Its long reverberating blow,
So loud and clear, it seemed the ear
Of dusty death must wake and hear.
And there the startling drum and fife
Fired the living with fiercer life;
While overhead, with wild increase;
Forgetting its ancient toll of peace,
The great bell swung as ne'er before;
It seemed as it would never cease;
And every word its ardor flung
From off its jubilant iron tongue
Was, "War! War! War!"

"Who dares?"—this was the patriot's cry,
As striding from the desk he came,—
"Come out with me, in Freedom's name,
For her to live, for her to die?"
A hundred hands flung up reply,
A hundred voices answered "I!"

—*Thomas Buchanan Read.*

"GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH"

Patrick Henry's most famous speech. Delivered in the Virginia Convention, March 23, 1775, on a resolution to put the Commonwealth into a State of Defence.

Mr. President, no man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the house. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen, if, entertaining, as I do, opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the house is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at the truth, and fulfil the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through

fear of giving offence, I should consider myself as guilty of treason toward my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the Majesty of Heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those, who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it.

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years, to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves and the house? Is it that insidious smile with which our petitions have been lately received? Trust it not, sir, it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourself to be betrayed with a kiss.

Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with those warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation?

Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation; the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask, gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy in this quarter of the world to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us; they can be meant for no other.

They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject? Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves longer. Sir, we have done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and Parliament.

Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances

have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned with contempt from the foot of the throne! In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free—if we mean to preserve inviolate these inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending—if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained—we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us!

They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power.

Three millions of people armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our

battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable—and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come!

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

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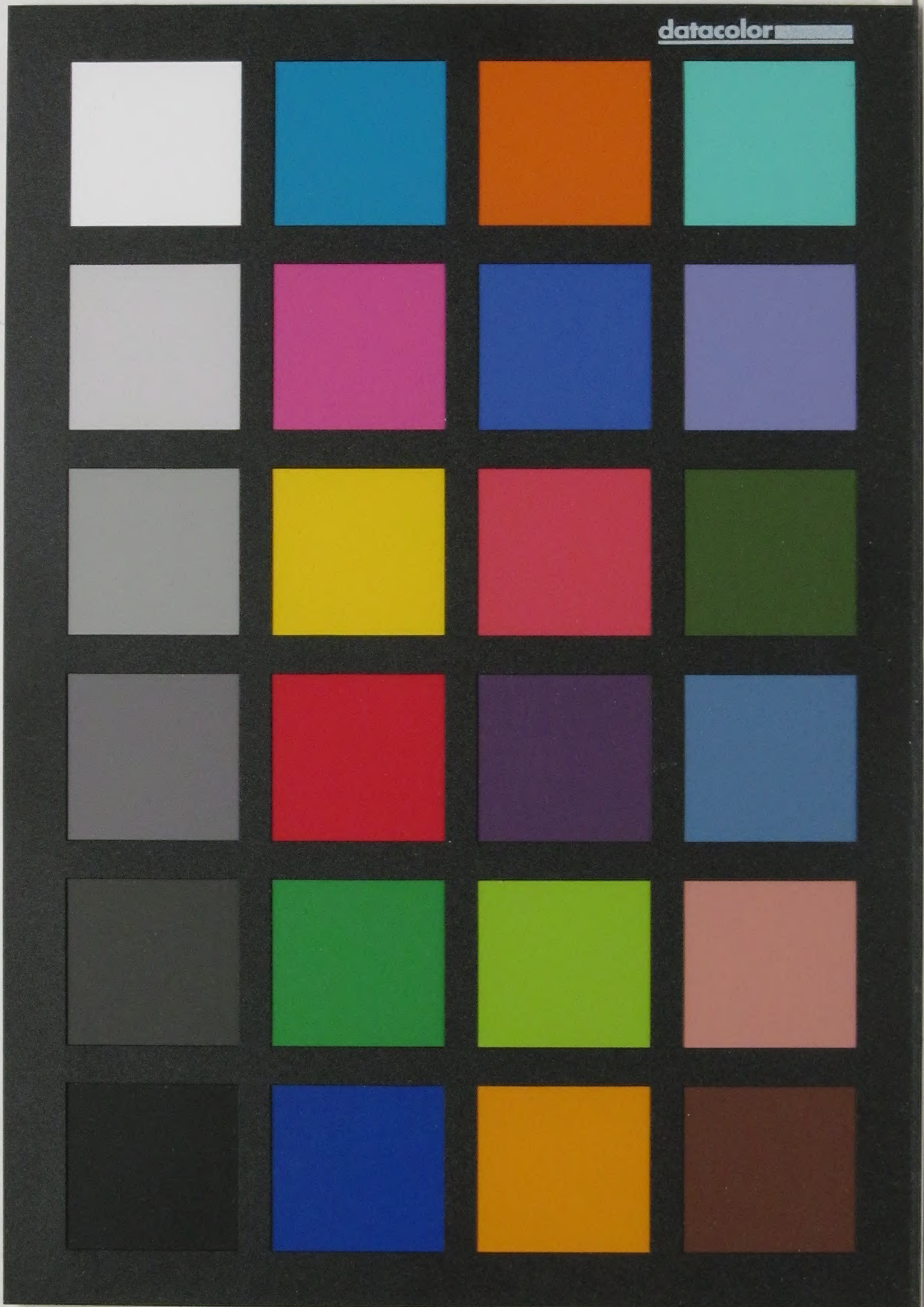
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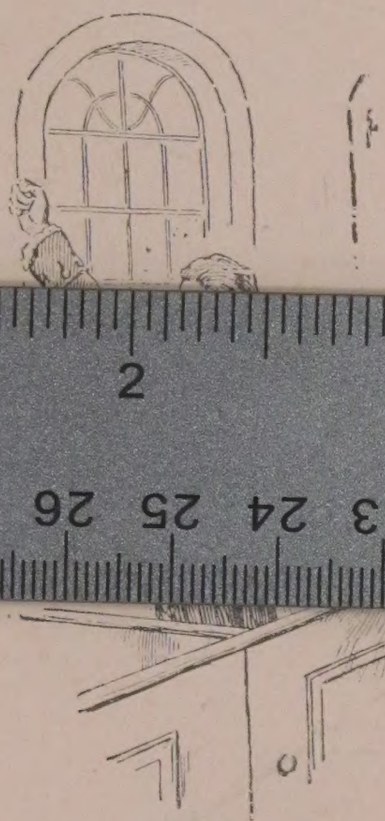

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